Judaism, Christianity & Islam: Forgotten Shared Beliefs of the Abrahamic Faiths

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DEC 09, 2015

> I think that monotheistic religions, having a common reference to One God, should and must dialogue. The three religions which Abraham inspired have many more common facets than those which divide them. Religion must be the means by which to affirm the ethical significance of existence, regardless of one's profession of faith.
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> Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV,
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> (Interview with Correre della Sera, Massimo Nava, October 22, 2001)

The faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share a large number of theological beliefs and ethical principles. In fact, all three religions revere the Prophet Abraham and share more in common with each other than other religious traditions. Most importantly all three religions affirm the existence of one God, the Absolute and Infinite Reality continuously creating and sustaining all things in existence [for a rational and logical proof of this classical concept of God, click

here]. The below chart presents 28 key theological beliefs of Abrahamic monotheistic theology in which the general Jewish, Christian and Muslim positions overlap greatly. It is hoped that readers will see how much commonality exists between the faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and how this unites all Jews, Christians and Muslims in a spiritual bond of brotherhood. (All of these theological positions have more specific interpretations among the different branches of each faith, but they are presented here at the most basic level). This means that the Judeo-Christian and Muslim civilizations share a religious, cultural and spiritual ethos: there is no clash of civilizations but only a clash of ignorance. But this ignorance can be healed with education and the embrace of difference through pluralism.

> Another, even more fundamental reason for the underlying inner affinity of the two civilisations is to be found in the shared point of origin of the three monotheistic religions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. All are linked to a common ancestor — Abraham — whose mythical presence has survived in the citadel of Aleppo. Islam, the most recent of the three revelations, has always acknowledged and confirmed the older religious traditions and has also provided, through its various regional cultures, successful models for religious and ethnic coexistence.
>
> – Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV,

> (Preface to Stefano Bianc, Syria, Medieval Citadels Between East and West', May 2007, Read Here)

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Theological Beliefs	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
God is One and unique without any parts	✓	✓	✓
God is a Trinity of three Persons (Father, Son, Spirit)		✓	
God's Word (eternal Torah, Logos, eternal Qur'an) exists before the creation of all things	✓	✓	✓
God creates all existents through His Word (Logos)	✓	✓	✓
God creates angels and Human Souls	✓	✓	✓
God created all human beings in His image and from one soul	✓	✓	✓
The Covenant is the first Book revealed by God	✓	✓	✓
God conveys guidance to human beings through the Holy Spirit	✓	✓	✓
Adam & Eve committed "original sin" which all humans inherit		✓	
God spoke through His Prophets including Adam, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, & the Prophets of Israel	✓	✓	✓
Abraham exemplifies obedience, faith and submission to God	✓	✓	✓
God revealed the Torah through Moses	✓	✓	✓
God revealed the Psalms through David	✓	✓	✓
God spoke through Zechariah, Mary and John the Baptist		✓	✓
Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary		✓	✓
Jesus is God's Prophet, Messenger and Messiah (CHRIST)		✓	✓
God revealed the Gospel through Jesus Christ		✓	✓
Jesus Christ is the Son of God and God incarnate		✓	
Jesus' death on the Cross and Resurrection redeem original sin		✓	

Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV is the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. He is the direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, the direct descendant of Prophet Abraham and the spiritual legatee of the religious authority of all the Abrahamic Prophets. We now present the Ismaili Imam's remarks on the spiritual unity of the Abrahamic monotheistic religions alongside the summary of the chart below:

The Ismaili Imam, Aga Khan IV, in discussions with His Eminence D. Jose Policarpo, the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon and Chancellor of the Catholic University of Portugal

1. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all agree on 18 out of the above 28 theological positions: The first area of agreement is on theology – concerning the unity of God, the concept of creation, the pre-existent Word of God, angels and human souls, the spiritual status and unity of humanity, Divine revelation to Prophets, the example of Abraham, the revelation of scripture (Torah, Psalms);

> We have heard predictions for some years now about some inevitable clash of the industrial West with the Muslim world. These multiplied, of course, in the wake of the 9/11 tragedies and other violent episodes. But most Muslims don't think that way; only an extreme minority does. For most of us, there is singularly little in our theology that would clash with the other Abrahamic faiths, with Christianity and Judaism. And there is much more in harmony. What has happened to the Islamic tradition that says that our best friends will be from the other Abrahamic Faiths, known as the "People of the Book", all of whose faith builds on monotheistic revelation?
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> – Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV,
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> (88th Stephen A. Ogden, Jr. '60 Memorial Lecture on International Affairs, March 10, 2014, Read Here)

1. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all agree on the necessity on following Divinely-inspired law (Torah, Halacha, Church Canon Law, Shari'ah) that guides all human religious and social activity in one's relationship with God;

> Recent press references to the Shari'a, the traditional Islamic system of jurisprudence, are illustrated by its manifestations in Afghanistan. Journalists learn to use these words — but how many of them know what they really mean? How many of them understand, for example, that the Shari'a is seen by most Muslims as a changing body of law, subject to what we call the fiqh, the

> capacity for evolving interpretation. How many of them are aware of the selective and moderate application of the Shari'a in the legal systems of those Islamic countries which do allow its application? How many of them know that Arabic translators of the Old Testament used the word Shari'a to designate the Torah, underlining a shared perception of the Divine Law that governs the spiritual relationship between God and His believers? How many are knowledgeable enough to appreciate the Shari'a's illuminating qualities in civil law?
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> – Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV,
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> (Commonwealth Press Union Conference Keynote Address, October 17, 1996, Read Here)

1. Christianity and Islam agree on an additional 4 theological positions (agreeing on a total of 22 shared positions) – concerning belief in the predecessors of Jesus, Jesus' virgin birth from Mary and his status as God's Prophet, Messenger, and Messiah (Christ);
2. Judaism, Christianity and Islam disagree over the theological status of Jesus; Judaism does not recognize Jesus' prophethood; Christianity and Islam recognize Jesus as God's Prophet, Messenger and Messiah born of the Virgin Mary but disagree over his divinity; Christianity reveres Jesus as the Son of God (Second Person of the Trinity) and as the incarnation of God on earth;

Islam recognizes Muhammad as the final Prophet and Messenger of God while Judaism and Christianity do not recognize Muhammad's prophethood;

3. Judaism, Christianity and Islam share a great deal over practical matters of daily living: the necessity of daily prayer (formal prayer, informal prayer), of living according to God's will expressed through rules of of conduct, common values and ethical principles; salvation by faith and Divine grace, the accounting on the Day of Judgment, and benedictions of Peace (shalom, peace).

> What I am saying is that the basis of an understanding can be put into effect through the acceptance of the ethical principles common to the Abrahamic faiths. Forms are different. The ethical principles, the principles on which the human society lives, the attitude towards the poor, the attitude towards the marginalised, the attitude or the preoccupations of a society dominated by the male portion of the society, all of that, we can find it everywhere. We find it in the Christian society, in Christian cultures of the past, of the present, and in the Muslim World it is the same thing.
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> – Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV,
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> (Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International Interview, November 8, 2001)

1. Despite some theological differences, Jews, Christians, and Muslims are all the spiritual descendants of Abraham, sharing much more in common than what divides them as members of a greater spiritual communion; they can and must work together to uplift the quality of human society worldwide on a shared ethical basis:

The Ismaili Imam, Aga Khan IV, meets His Eminence D. Jose Policarpo, the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon and Chancellor of the Catholic University of Portugal

> There are those who say that faiths divide. This may be true. But today we must explore every opportunity to have different faiths come together in addressing the problems of our respective societies. We come from the same common religious heritage, descendants of Abraham, and it is enjoined on us to address the problems of society on the same ethical premises.